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OMENS AND AUGURY IN PLAUTUS.

BY CHARLES BURTON GULICK.

OF all the topics relating to ancient life which we find so abundantly illustrated in Plautus, perhaps none can be regarded as affording in general such safe evidence of purely Roman habit and custom as that which relates to popular superstition. It is my purpose to record all references and allusions to omens and augury in the extant comedies, treating them wherever possible with special reference to the question whether they may be considered as representing Greek or Roman habits of thought.

The word *omen* seems originally to have meant only a spoken word, which by its favorable or unfavorable import might seem to shadow forth a favorable or unfavorable event in the future. This was expressed in Greek by *φήμη*.¹ Hence often the necessity of complete silence, the familiar *fauere linguis* or *εὐφημεῖν*,² cf. Fest. p. 195, *omen uelut oremen, quod fit ore augurium, quod non auibus alioque modo fit*. To talk of death, or use the word *letum*, was a bad omen, cf. *Merc.* 482, Charinus: *Te nunc consulo: Responde, quo leto censes me ut peream potissimum?* — Eutychus: *non taces? caue tu istuc deixis*, where *istuc* refers euphemistically to self-destruction as a bad omen, and the whole command is equivalent to *fauere lingua*. In the same play, Demipho dreams of a goat, which he interprets to be himself. Lysimachus shortly after enters and says, v. 272: *Profecto ego illunc hircum castrari uolo, Ruri qui nobeis exhibet negotium*; this Demipho overhears, and he says: *Nec omen illuc mihi nec auspicium*³ *placet: Quasi hircum metuo ne uxor me castret mea*. Here the mention of a goat by Lysimachus, at the very moment when Demipho is also thinking of one, is a coincidence which is interpreted as an

¹ Xen. *Mem.* i. 1. 3.

² Cf. the "*Unberufen!*" of the Germans.

³ *Auspicium* here means 'beginning,' cf. *Men.* 1149 below, p. 240.

omen, in this case unfavorable. A mention of death in one's family was naturally ominous to one returning from a journey, as in the case of Theopropides in *Most.* 462, when Tranio tells him that by touching the door of the alleged haunted house he has committed murder: *Occidisti hercle* — Theop.: *Quem mortulem?* — Tran.: *Omnis tuos.* — Theop.: *Di te deaque omnes faxint cum istoc omine.* A malicious prediction in reference to an unborn child was also a bad omen, and it is no sooner uttered than the gods are at once invoked to avert the evil; cf. *Amph.* 718, Sosia: *Amphitruo, speravi ego istam tibi parturam filium: Verum non est puero gravida.* — *Amph.*: *Quid igitur?* — So.: *Insania.* — Alcumena: *Equidem sanam et deos quaeso ut salua pariam filium: Verum tu malum magnum habebis, si hic suum officium facit: Ob istuc omen, ominator, capies quod te concedet.* *Ominator* occurs only here, and means, not 'diviner,'¹ but 'one who utters a word of ill omen.'² A blessing or good wish at the beginning of an enterprise was regarded as a good omen. So *Epid.* 396, Apocides: *Di deaque te adiuvant.* — Periphanes: *omen placet.* — Apoec.: *Quin omni omnis suppetunt res prosperae.*

In the passage cited from the *Amphitruo*, Alcumena calls upon 'the gods' in general to avert the omen. But Jupiter was particularly the source of omens, and could foresee the future and avert evil. In this capacity he is called *prodigialis*. Thus Sosia, alleging that Alcumena has had a bad dream, says to her, *Amph.* 739: *Sed mulier, postquam experrecta's, te prodigiali Ioui Aut mola salsa hodie aut ture conprecata oportuit.* Here the word *tus* points to the Greek origin of the passage, and *mola salsa* may be a rough translation of οἶλα.³ *Prodigialis* appears in this sense only here, and evidently represents τεράστιος,⁴ an epithet of Zeus which expresses part of his function as ἀλεξίκακος or ἀποτρόπαιος. Here, therefore, we have a reference to the Greek (as well as Roman) custom of piacular sacrifice

¹ White and Riddell.

² The fact that it is a ἀπαξ εἰρημένον may possibly indicate that it is the translation of some Greek word. But the word is formed naturally, and there is no reason for supposing that it was not in common use.

³ For the difference between the two, see Schoemann, *Gr. Alt.* II, 239.

⁴ Luc. *Tim.* 41; Aristid. II, p. 86 Dind. Zeus τεράστιος had a sanctuary near Gythion, 'Εφ. 'Αρχ. 1892, p. 57.

offered to avert portended evil. The sooner it was done, the better, as *hodie* indicates. When Jupiter interpreted the future himself, there was of course no need of *arioli* or *aruspices*.¹ Yet any god might inspire prophecy in his own realm, as Venus is said to do *Mil. Glor.* 1257,² and the process of taking auguries and observing omens was embraced in the general conception of *religio*.³ Cf. *Merc.* 875:

Eu. Si huc item properes ut istuc properas, facias rectius.
Huc secundus uentus nunc est: cape modo uorsoriam.
Hic faunius serenust, istic auster imbricus:
Hic facit tranquillitatem, iste omnis fluctus conciet.
Recipe te ad terram, Charine, huc: nam dextrorsum quid uides?
Nimbus ater imberque instant. spice⁴ nunc ad sinistram:
Caelum ut est splendore plenum non ex aduorso uides? —
Cha. Religionem mi obiecisti: recipiam me illuc.⁵

This is remarkable, as occurring in a play so preëminently Greek in character.⁶

The regular classes of professional interpreters and soothsayers are frequently mentioned. The *haruspex* in particular examined the entrails of sacrificial victims, often exacting a high price; cf. *Poen.* 463: *Condigne haruspex, non homo trioboli, Omnibus in extis aibat portendi mihi Malum damnumque et deos esse iratos mihi. Quid ei diuini aut humani aequomst credere? Mina mihi argenti dono postilla datast.* The passage is Greek, as the words *trioboli* and *mina* show, yet the practice of *extispicium* formed part of the Roman (or Etruscan) *haruspicina*, as explained by Cicero.⁷ The office of the *ariolus* was the same as that of the *haruspex*. In *Most.* 571, the money-lender says: *Certe hic homo [Tranio] inanis est.* — *Tranio: Hic homost certe*

¹ *Amph.* 1132-4: *ariolos, aruspices Mitte omnis: quae futura et quae facta eloquar, Multo adeo melius quam illi, quom sum Iuppiter.*

² Below, p. 238.

³ The origin of the word *religio* points clearly to this connection, *Hom. Il.* 12, 237-240; *Curt. Gr. Etym.*⁵ p. 364.

⁴ Technical word applied to augural observation. See below, p. 246.

⁵ Somewhat different is *Curc.* 350, *Vocat ad cenam: religio fuit, denegare nolui.*

⁶ The *ἑμροπος* of Philemon. In it (v. 945) Calchas is mentioned as a well-known seer.

⁷ *De Div.* ii. 12. 28. *Extā inspicere* is mentioned of a sheep, *Aulul.* 565.

hariolus; i.e. "he has guessed the truth—I am empty." Tranio takes the word *inanis* to refer to his own hungry condition, and jokingly remarks that the money-lender can see through his inwards as well as a *hariolus*. *Arioli* and *haruspices* are closely joined in one expression in *Poen.* 791, *Eheu, quom ego habui hos ariolos haruspices*, etc. A prophet in general was called *coniector*, a word applied even to the great Tiresias in *Amph.* 1128. The feminine was *coniectrix*, *Mil. Glor.* 693. So *ariolus* and *ariola*. Their ravings and frenzy, with sighs, gnashing of teeth, and striking of thighs, are referred to in *Truc.* 599, *Med intuitur gemens. Traxit ex intumo uentre suspirium. Hoc uide: dentibus frendit, icit femur. Num obsecro nam ariolust, qui ipsus se uerberat?* The *arioli* belonged to the artisan class, *δημιουργοί*, or *artifices*, as *Cas.* 355 implies.¹ Chalinus: *At pol ego hau credo, sed certo scio.*—Lysidamus: *Plus artificumst mi quam rebar: hariolum hunc habeo domi.*

A frequent term applied to persons who possessed clairvoyant powers was *superstitiosus*, *Amph.* 323, Sosia: *Illic homo [Mercurius] superstitiosust* (since he knows that I have been away); *Curc.* 397, *Superstitiosus hic quidemst: uera praedicat.* The feminine occurs *Rud.* 1139, *Quid si ista [Palaestra] aut superstitiosa aut hariolast?*² *atque omnia Quidquid inerit uera dicet?* From the frequent use of *hariolor* = 'foretell,' we often find the word in the sense merely of 'divine,' 'guess' the truth. The passages are *Asin.* 316, 579, 924; *Rud.* 347, 377, 1141; *Mil. Glor.* 1256; *Cist.* 746.³ In the case of *Mil.* 1256, where the word means 'guess,' the allusion to prophecy as inspired by Venus is still very plain, and the original sense of the word seems to me to be not wholly forgotten. By extension, also, the Plautine *auguro* often means 'be circumspect,' 'look round with an augur's care' (*a terra ad caelum*, *Pers.* 604), as in *Cist.* 694. Again, *augurium* can mean 'interpretation of an augury,' as in *Asin.* 263.⁴ This extensive use of words like *hariolor*, *auguro*, *augurium*, etc., only shows how thoroughly the custom of taking auguries and auspices was fixed in the habits and thoughts of the people, and

¹ So *μάρτυς* in Homer, *Od.* 17, 383-4.

² *Superstitiosa* is joined with *ariolatio* in Enn. ap. Cic. *de Div.* i. 31. 66.

³ Cf. Langen, *Beiträge* pp. 260-1.

⁴ Cf. *Ov. Met.* i. 395, where *augurium* is the *interpretation* of an oracle.

how readily, therefore, such words occurred to them. So Cic. *de Div.* i. 16. 28, *nilil fere quondam maioris rei nisi auspicato ne priuatim quidem gerebatur, quod etiam nunc nuptiarum auspices declarant, qui re omissa nomen tantum tenent.*¹ An unfavorable *auspiciu*m would deter one from prosecuting an undertaking (*Amph.* 690, *An te auspiciu*m conmoratumst), and even an unfavorable warning, if received in time to prevent loss or harm, was regarded with gratitude, *Aulul.* 669,

Ni subuenisset coruos, perissem miser
Nimis hercle ego illum coruom ad me ueniat uelim,
Qui indicium fecit, ut ego illic aliquid boni
Dicam.

Cicero's mention of the taking of auspices just before a marriage ceremony may be illustrated from *Cas.* 86, prologue, where *auspices* means *παράνυμφοι*, and the importance of incurring no evil by the bride's stumbling when she crosses the threshold of her new home is indicated in the warning words of the hymn in *Cas.* 815, *Sensim supera limen, tolle Pedes, mea noua nupta: Sospes iter incipe hoc, ut uiro tuo Semper sis superstes*, etc. A jocose, half ironical reference to taking auspices, showing how widely they might be applied, occurs *Capt.* 766, where Aristophontes, one of the captives, as he is sent off under guard by Hegio, says: *Exauspicau*i ex uinclis: *nunc intellego Redauspicandum esse in catenas denuo*, i.e. "I've got to get myself 're-auspiced' back into chains, though before I thought I had 'auspiced' myself out of them." In like manner auspices were taken just before a battle, *Pers.* 604. Dordalus is speaking of the girl to Sagaristio: *Hospes, uolo ego hanc percontari*. — Sag.: *A terra ad caelum quidlubet*. — Dord.: *Iube dum ea hoc accedat ad me*. — Sag.: *I sane ac morem illi gere. Percontare, exquire quiduis*. — Toxilus: *Age, age nunc tu: in proelium Vide ut ingrediare auspicato*. — Virgo: *liquidumst auspiciu*m. Cf. *Pseud.* 759 below. So at the beginning of a day, *Pers.* 689, *Lucro faciundo ego auspicau*i in hunc diem, and *Rud.* 717, *non hodie isti rei auspicau*i, *ut cum furcifero fabuler. Auspiciu*m then comes naturally to signify 'beginning,'² and in the

¹ Cf. Liv. vi. 41. 4.

² Conversely, *principium* occurs in almost the sense of *auspiciu*m, *Merc.* 963, *Stich.* 672, but not 358.

phrase *auspicio*, 'by the authority of,' 'at the instance' or 'on the responsibility of,' cf. *Amph.* 192, *Epid.* 343, 381. As the manner of beginning constituted an omen for the enterprise begun,¹ *auspicium* may have both senses of *beginning* and *omen*, as in *Men.* 1148, where Menaechmus II says of his slave Messenio: *Liber esto*. — *Men.* I.: *Quom tu's liber, gaudeo, Messenio*. — *Mess.*: *Sed meliorest opus auspicio, ut liber perpetuo siem* (i.e. he wants money).

After comparing these instances of the thoroughly Roman use of *auguro*, *auspico*, *auspicium* with Cicero's statement, we find it clear that in all these cases Plautus is representing Roman custom, even when he finds the occasion for employing these words in his Greek originals.

In general, a bird appearing on the left was a favorable omen, described in the phrase *auspicium liquidum*, cf. *Pseud.* 759, *Quicquid incerti mi in animo prius aut ambiguum fuit Nunc liquet, nunc defaecatumst cor mihi, nunc peruamst: Omnis ordine sub signis ducam legiones meas Aui sinistra, auspicio liquido atque ex mea sententia*. So *Epid.* 181, *Tacet! habete animum bonum Liquido exeo auspicio foras Aui sinistra*. Cf. *Pers.* 607, above. But special superstitions were attached to certain birds, as the *coruos* and the *parra*, which, seen from the right, were considered lucky. For this we have Cicero's express testimony (*Div.* i. 7. 12), so that we may safely trust the passage in *Asin.* 258, with all its joking:

Vnde sumam? quem interuortam? quo hanc celocem conferam?
 Inpetritum, inauguratumst: quouis admittunt aues.
 Picus et cornix ab laeua, coruos, parra ab dextera
 Consuadent: certum herclest uostram consequi sententiam.
 Sed quid hoc, quod picus ulmum tundit? haud temerariumst.
 Certe hercle ego quantum ex augurio auspicioque intellego,
 Aut mihi in mundo sunt uirgae aut atriensi Saureae.

Here the *picus* and the *cornix* on the left have the beneficial potency of ordinary birds, while the *coruos* and the *parra* on the right possess an influence equally good. The slave's interpretation of the striking of the elm by the woodpecker, however, only shows to what comic extent individual imagination might run in explaining auguries, and

¹ Cf. *Merc.* 274, p. 235.

is not to be taken as a proof that there existed any popular superstition¹ with regard to such a phenomenon.

On the other hand, we find from another well-known passage (*Aulul.* 624) that the cry of a *coruos* on the left was unlucky. There Euclio is fearful that his treasure has been discovered: *Non temerest quod coruos cantat mihi nunc ab laeva manu. Semul radebat pedibus terram et uoce crocibat sua.*² It would seem, therefore, that the influence of the *coruos* was exercised in a reverse way to that of most other birds.³

In speaking of 'right' and 'left,' it is to be remembered that the Roman augur faced the south when taking auguries,⁴ whereas the Greek practice was just the reverse. To a Roman, therefore, a bird coming from the left, or east, was lucky, while one from the right, or west, was unlucky. Among the Greeks, too, a bird from the east was lucky, one from the west unlucky, but east and west are here right and left respectively. Thus:

Greek	{ (1) right — east — lucky, (2) left — west — unlucky,
Roman	{ (3) right — west — unlucky, (4) left — east — lucky.

The cases quoted (*Pseud.* 759 ff., *Epid.* 181 ff., and the *picus* and *cornix*, *Asin.* 260) of favorable birds appearing from the left, fall under (4) above; an exception to (3) and (4) is found in the case of the *coruos* (and *parra*), *Asin.* 260, *Aulul.* 624. That this is really an exception to (3) and (4), believed in by the Romans themselves, and not an accidental intrusion of Greek superstition according to

¹ Yet it was always important in augury to observe a bird's *actions*, ἐνέργεια. Cf. M. Psellus quoted below, note 2.

² According to Michael Psellus (11th century), four things were to be distinguished in observing ravens and crows in augury: πτήσις, φωνή, καθέδρα, ἐνέργεια. The second and fourth are denoted in the passage here. See the fragment of Psellus in *Philol.* VIII, 1. 166-8.

³ That birds were to be thus distinguished is shown, for the Greeks, by Aesch. *Prom.* 488, γαμψωνύχων τε πτήσιν οἰωνῶν σκεθρῶς | διῶρισ', οἷτινές τε δεξιῶι | φύσιν εὐωνόμους τε.

⁴ Varro ap. Fest. p. 339 M., *L. L.* vii. 7, quoted p. 242. Cf. Liv. i. 18; Plin. *N. H.* ii. 142.

(1) and (2), is clear from the passage in the *Asinaria*, which consistently gives the Roman belief. To the Roman of Plautus's day, therefore, a *coruos* from the right or west was just as favorable as a *picus* coming from the left or east. When we find the opposite superstition recorded in the Augustan Age, what is the explanation? In *Ov. Her.* ii. 115 the expression *auibus sinistris* indicates a bad omen, cf. *omen sinistrum* *ibid.* xiii. 49. Horace (*Carm.* iii. 27. 11-16) speaks of a *coruos* from the east as lucky, a *picus* from the left as unlucky. The explanation is not, as A. Keseberg thinks,¹ that belief had changed in the relatively short interval between Plautus and Horace. It simply means that Horace and Ovid, in their fondness for Grecizing, have here followed Greek, not Roman, superstition. The 27th ode of the third book is preëminently Greek in theme and spirit.²

The phrase *in mundo* here calls for attention. It is usually derived from a substantive *mundum*, and means 'in readiness.' Cf. Charisius p. 201, 10, *in mundo pro palam, et in expedito ac cito*, where Plaut. *Pseud.* 499 is quoted, *quia mihi sciebam pistrinum in mundo fore.*³ Plautus uses it besides in *Cas.* 565, *Epid.* 618, *Pers.* 45, *Asin.* 264, 316, *Stich.* 477. But aside from the fact that the form *mundum* never occurs, this derivation does not make clear the real origin and primitive sense of the word. In at least two of these passages (*Asin.* 264, quoted above, and 316), the word is used in conjunction with augury or guesses at the future. Here it might mean 'on the horizon,' or, in astrological language, 'in my horoscope.' It has this sense, I think, in Varro ap. Fest. p. 339, *A deorum sede cum in meridiem spectes, ad sinistram sunt partes mundi exorientes, ad dexteram occidentes. factum arbitror, ut sinistra meliora auspicia quam dextra esse existimentur.* This agrees with what he says about a 'templum' in *L. L.* vii. 7, *eius templi partes quattuor dicuntur, sinistra ab oriente, dextra ab occasu, antica ad meridiem, postica ad septentrionem. In terris dictum templum locus augurii aut auspicii causa quibusdam conceptis uerbis finitus, etc.*⁴ Now, *mundus* in the sense of *templum*

¹ *Quaestiones Plaut. et Terent. ad religionem spectantes* p. 8.

² See Kiessling's introduction to the ode.

³ So Placidus p. 58, Deverling. Cf. *Enn. Ann.* 457, Vahlen.

⁴ Cf. Fest. p. 157. J. B. Greenough, *Harv. Studies* III, 182.

is well known. The famous *mundus* or circular excavation made at the founding of Rome, as described by Cato,¹ was a *templum* sacred to the Di Manes, and thrice a year the spirits rose from it to earth again.² Taking *mundus*, then, to mean the horizon as marked off and inspected by the augur, — in other words, an augural *templum*, though larger than the *auguraculum*, being in fact the circle of which that was the centre, — the phrase *in mundo* can be explained as signifying originally ‘on the augural horizon,’ and so ‘foredoomed,’ ‘ready.’ This meaning is suitable to all the passages above mentioned.

The effect of a good omen might be annulled by the immediate interposition of some other sign of unfavorable import. This was denoted by the verb *obscaeuo*. Thus, after Libanos in *Asin.* 258 ff. (quoted above, p. 240) has observed all the signs of the birds which seem to him favorable for carrying out his trick, he is interrupted by the sudden appearance of Leonida in great trepidation (vs. 265), *Sed quid illuc, quod exanimatus currit huc Leonida? Metuo, quom illic* (‘for in that way’) *obscaeuauit meae falsae fallaciae*, which Nonius, 146. 1 explains thus: *obscaeuauit, quasi scaeuum, malum omen obstulit*. Here *scaeuus* evidently has the unfavorable signification of the Greek σκαίος, with which it is related.³ Yet *obscaeuare* seems to be used in a good sense by the parasite in *Stich.* 459, *Auspicio hercle hodie ego optimo exiui foras. Quom strena mi obscaeuauit, spectatum hoc mihist, Mustella murem ut abstulit praeter pedes. Nam ut illa uitam repperit hodie sibi, Item me spero facturum, augurium ac facit*. The passage is corrupt, but the general meaning is that a good omen (*strena*) has interposed to prevent the fulfilment of a bad omen observed previously.⁴ It thus forms part of the whole process of the *auspicium*; cf. 463, *augurium facit*, and 502, *eam auspicaui ego in re*

¹ Fest. pp. 154–7. Cf. Müller-Deecke, *Etrusker* II, 98–100, 147, and note 72, against Prell. *Röm. Myth.*³ II, 67, note 3.

² Ateius Capito ap. Fest. *loc. cit.*

³ Curt. *Gr. Etym.*⁵ p. 160.

⁴ As it happens, what he had interpreted here as a *strena* turns out to be, untrustworthy, *Stich.* 497 ff., especially 499, *certumst mustellae posthac numquam credere*. The mere appearance of a weasel, γαλή, without reference to its ἐνέργεια is a bad omen in Aristoph. *Eccles.* 792.

capitali mea. The term *strena* was applied to a gift bestowed especially on the first day of the year, for the sake of the good omen, in the hope that more blessings would follow.¹ Fest. p. 313, *strenam uocamus quae datur die religioso ominis boni gratia*. It thus formed a good beginning, *auspicium*, εὐαρχισμός,² expressed in holiday gifts. It appears that *strenae* were originally the consecrated branches brought from the grove of the goddess Strenia, and carried to the seat of augury on the Capitol at the beginning of each new year.³ The custom was instituted by Titus Tatius,⁴ to whom in general was attributed the establishment of many augural rites.⁵

In Plautus, then, *strena* means 'good omen,' as in *Stich.* 459, just quoted, and 672, *Sequor, et domum redeunti principium placet. Bona scaeua strenaque obuiam accessit mihi*. Here we note that the word *scaeua* is qualified by *bona*, as it is again in *Pseud.* 1136-8, *Hic quidem ad me recta habet rectam uiam. Bene ego ab hoc praedatus ibo: noui: bona scaeuast mihi*. It is evident, therefore, that *scaeua*, as Nonius uses it, had an unfavorable meaning, which appeared in *obscaeuaui*, *Asin.* 266, and thus corresponded to σκαῖός. But Plautus must have felt that it had a neutral sense, inasmuch as he always qualifies the word, and *obscaeuaui* in a good sense has already been noted in the passage from *Stichus*. So Varro *L. L.* vii. 97, in giving the derivation of *obscaenum* (= *turpe*): *potest uel ab eo, quod pueris turpicula res in collo quaedam suspenditur, ne quid obsit, bonae scaeuae causa scaeuola appellata*. I have not, to be sure, found *mala scaeua*, but adjectives equally ominous occur in *Cas.* 969 ff., *Ecce autem uxor obuiamst. Nunc ego inter sacrum saxumque sum nec quo fugiam scio: Hac lupi, hac canes: lupina scaeua fusti rem gerit. Hercle, opinor, permutaui ego illuc nunc uerbum uetus. Hac ibo: caninam scaeuam spero meliorem fore*. Lysidamus is here suddenly confronted by his

¹ Pompon. ap. Non. p. 16, *adside si qua uenturast alia strena*.

² KGL IV. p. 578. Joh. Lyd. *de Mens.* 4. 4.

³ Prell. *Röm. Myth.* II, 234. Varro *L. L.* v. 47. Joh. Lyd. *loc. cit.*

⁴ Symmachus, *Ep.* x. 15, Seeck. He connects *strena* with *strenua*, as do Non. p. 16, Augustin. iv. 11. 16, Joh. Lyd. *loc. cit.* 'Strenia, or Strenua, the [Sabine] goddess of healthy bodily development.' Prell. II, 213.

⁵ Varro *L. L.* v. 85. For the later customs relating to *strenae*, see Pauly, *Real-Encycl.* s.v.

mistress (*lupa*) and his wife (*canis*¹). They both constitute respectively a *lupina* and a *canina scaeva*, which are for him decidedly unfavorable. *Scaeva* here cannot possibly retain any of its original sense of 'left-side omen.'² The word alone is strictly neutral in meaning. There is, however, an allusion to the common superstition that the appearance of a dog was often an unfavorable omen (hence *canina scaeva* = *mala scaeva*), but Lysidamus reasons that to follow his wife (*canina scaeva*) is safer than to follow the courtesan (*lupina scaeva*), and thus he has, as he thinks, completely changed the old idea about the ominousness of a *canina scaeva*. From being *peior*, it becomes for him *melior*.

Another superstition remains to be noticed, — the belief in the ominous significance of twitching, *palpitatio*.³ This, with ringing in the ears (*tinnitus aurium*), and sneezing (*sternutatio*), was regarded as ominous, and the interpretation of them all is included by Suidas under a single separate branch of augury, τὸ παλμικὸν οἰώνισμα,⁴ under which he also puts the phenomenon of itching. Plautus has several references to the last: *Mil. Glor.* 397, *ita dorsus totus prurit*; *Pers.* 32, *iam scapulae*⁵ *pruriunt*; *Asin.* 315, *scapulae gestibant mihi*; *Amph.* 295, *perii, dentes pruriunt*; *Poen.* 1315, *num tibi, adulescens, malae aut dentes pruriunt*; *Bacch.* 1193, *caput prurit*;⁶ so, comically, *Amph.*

¹ For *canis* in this sense, cf. *Cas.* 317, where Lysidamus says: *Quid istuc est? quicum litigas, Olympio?* — Olympio: *Cum eadem qua tu semper.* — L.: *Cum uxorem mea?* — O.: *Quam tu mi uxorem? quasi uenator tu quidem es: Dies atque noctes cum cane aetatem exigis.* κῶων is a familiar term of reproach applied even to goddesses in Homer.

² Harper's Dict. s.v. *scaevus*.

³ Augustin. *de Doctr. Christ.* ii. 20, *his adiunguntur millia inanissimarum observationum: si membrum aliquod salierit, etc.*

⁴ Suid. s. οἰώνισμα. Cf. Cram. *An. Ox.* IV, 240. Ameis, *Adnott. ad Theocrit.* p. 26.

⁵ Perhaps we may compare the special ὁμωπλατοσκοπία of a sacrificial animal. See Michael Psellus, *Philol.* VIII, i. 166–8.

⁶ This last is excluded by Lorenz (ad *Mil. Glor.* 397), as referring merely to pruriency. But so does *Pers.* 32, which Lorenz admits. Sweating and trembling are comically regarded as an ill omen in *Asin.* 287 ff., Leonida: *perii ego oppido, nisi Libanum inuenio iam, ubi ubist gentium.* — Lib.: *Illic homo socium ad malam rem quaerit quem adiungat sibi. Non placet: pro monstro extemplost, quando qui sudat tremat.*

323, *gestiunt pugni mihi*. In Juvenal,¹ itching of the eye sends the superstitious woman to her horoscope. The twitching of the eyebrow is mentioned as portending some unknown good or evil in a passage often cited, *Pseud.* 104, *Spero alicunde hodie me bona opera aut mala mea Tibi inuenturum esse auxilium argentarium. Atque id futurum unde unde dicam nescio, Nisi quia futurumst: ita supercilium salit*. The eyebrows, we are told in Fest., p. 304-5, were deemed by women to be under the special protection of Juno Lucina, who was at once the goddess of light, which is perceived through the eye, and of childbirth,² and perhaps it is from this circumstance that the eyebrow generally was thought to have the power of portending good and evil. But Juno Lucina as goddess of light and of childbirth is a purely Roman divinity, whereas the twitching eyebrow was an object of Greek superstition. In illustration of the passage just quoted, the editors cite Theocr. iii. 37: ἄλλεται ὀφθαλμός μιν ὁ δεξιός· ἀρά γ' ἰδησὼ αὐτάν; But the cases, though close enough for purposes of comparison, are not exactly alike, since one refers to the eyebrow, the other to the eye; and, according to the Alexandrian Melampus, who wrote on the subject,³ the two had distinct interpretations attached to them, which it is not worth while to quote. It is interesting to observe, however, that St. Chrysostom⁴ interprets the twitching of the right eye unfavorably, in opposition to Theocritus. A case really parallel to that from the *Pseudolus*, and one which I have not seen quoted in illustration, is *Mil. Glor.* 691 ff., where Periplocomenus describes wives who say: *da, mi uir, Calendis meam qui matrem moenerem: Da qui faciam condimenta, da quod dem quinquatribus Praecantrici, coniectrici, hariolae atque haruspicae: Flagitiumst si nil mittetur, quae supercilio spicit*; i.e. 'it's a sin not to send something to her who divines by the eyebrow,' or 'who augurs from the twitching of the brow.' For *specio* or *spicio* used especially of augury, cf. Varro, *L. L.* vi. 82: *in auguriis etiam nunc augures dicunt*

¹ vi. 578.

² Cf. Varro, *L. L.* v. 69.

³ *De Palpitatione Divinatio*, ed. Franz, Altenburg, 1780. His work is addressed to Ptolemy [Philadelphus], Fabr. *Bibl. Gr.* I, i. 15, p. 99.

⁴ Ad Paul. *Ephes.* 4, *Homil.* 12, πολλῶν δειμάτων αὐτοῖς ἡ ψυχὴ μεστή, οἷον . . . ἔξω . . . ἐξελθόντι ὁ ὀφθαλμός μοι ὁ δεξιὸς κάτωθεν ἀναπηδᾷ· δακρύων τοῦτο τεκμήριον.

auem specere. So *Merc.* 880, *spice ad sinisteram*.¹ Note that Plautus has no special word for such a prophetess: she is simply one *quae supercilio spicit*. Later, such augurs were called *salisatores*. Cf. Isidor. *Orig.* viii. 9. 29, *salisatores uocati sunt quia dum eis membrorum quaecunque partes salierint, aliquid sibi exinde prosperum seu triste significare praedicunt*. The Egyptians were noted for this art.² Celebrated writers on the subject were Phemonoe,³ Antiphon,⁴ and Posidonius.⁵

¹ Of entrails, *inspicere* is used, *Aulul.* 565. Cf. *Fest.* p. 2.

² Melampus, *op. cit.* p. 460.

³ Fabr. *Bibl. Gr.* I, i. 25, p. 154.

⁴ Melampus, *loc. cit.* Cic. *de Div.* i. ii. *passim*. Suid. s.v.

⁵ Suid. s.v.